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Woodford County XM

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Stockyards looks at site near Midway

Choice follows rebuff from Horse Park area

By Greg Kocher
CENTRAL KENTUCKY BUREAU

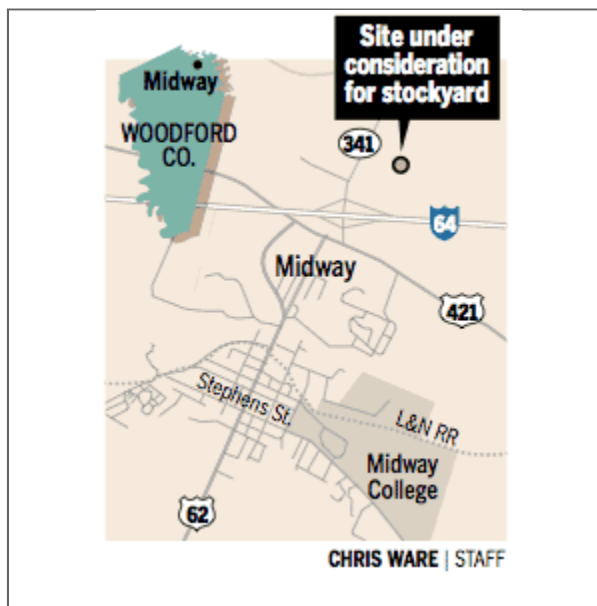
MIDWAY - Having been rebuffed in its effort to move near the Kentucky Horse Park, Blue Grass Stockyards now hopes to locate just off the Interstate 64 interchange at Midway.

The company is eyeing a 30-acre site at Midway Commerce Station District, an industrial park north of the interchange and east of Ky. 341 in Woodford County.

No offer has been made yet for the land, which would cost \$65,000 an acre because it already has water, electricity and roads for trucks. The site has the necessary access to an interstate highway for the movement of cattle into and out of the property, said Hampton "Hoppy" Henton Jr., a consultant to the stockyards.

"We think it would be a great place to relocate an ag marketing center," Henton said at last night's meeting of the Midway City Council.

Council members and citizens attending the meeting asked questions, but voiced no opposition. To the contrary, one council member welcomed the prospect.



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"This is the most positive thing I've seen out of this (industrial park) project," said council member Dale Benson. "You can barely see Midway from the site. It's going to be a good thing for local farmers."

The stockyards has bought and sold cattle on Forbes Road near downtown Lexington since the 1940s, but has sought a new location over the last two years.

Representatives of the stockyards have said the business needs to be near an interstate highway interchange. They had hoped to stay in Fayette County and locate near Interstate 75 and the Horse Park.

But they dropped that idea in February after Gov. Ernie Fletcher asked the stockyards company to look elsewhere because the Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games will be held at the park in 2010.

The games, seven world championships rolled into one event, are expected to attract 300,000 people from 40 or more countries.

Opposition to the I-75 site also came from people who live nearby, from the Horse Park, and from Georgetown officials who worried that runoff could pollute Royal Spring, which supplies most of that city's water.

Henton said the Midway site had been the No. 2 prospect behind the Fayette County property. But he said representatives in Clark and Shelby counties are also courting the stockyards.

Since 2004, Woodford County has surpassed Fayette County as the No. 1 agricultural county in the state, based on total cash receipts from crops and livestock. That's because of the sale of horses and stud fees in Woodford, which in 2004 had more than \$363 million in cash receipts from agriculture. Fayette County has \$339 million, according to the National Agricultural Statistics Service, a federal agency that compiles those figures.

Some 300,000 cattle a year are sold through the Blue Grass Stockyards, which last year had an annual payroll of \$1.3 million.

Henton and Michael Duckworth, a member of the Woodford County Economic Development Authority and the former agricultural extension agent for the county, said the stockyards might be the first anchor tenant for the industrial park.

All livestock would be indoors and under a roof. Cattle would be sold only on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and an occasional Saturday. A centralized collection of waste would send manure to a composting company.

The Economic Development Authority hopes to attract restaurants, hotels and other businesses traditionally associated with interchanges. Duckworth said such businesses are close to a similar facility in Ontario, Canada, and there's no reason why they can't be close to one another at the Midway site.

Henton said the stockyards would probably attract accessory businesses to the industrial park, such as agricultural insurance companies and brokerages.

The council voted 6-0 to seek a text amendment to the Woodford zoning ordinance that would add "agricultural marketing center" to the list of principal uses for the light-industrial zone. Without that amendment, the stockyards wouldn't be allowed on the Midway site.



The council's request will go to the Versailles-Midway-Woodford County Planning and Zoning Commission, which would hold a public hearing on the amendment.

Reach Greg Kocher in the Nicholasville bureau at (859) 885-5775 or gkocher1@herald-leader.com.

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